

# Gulf of Mexico Reef Fish Amendment 28

## Frequently Asked Questions

*January 2016*



### What is being proposed in Amendment 28 and the proposed rule?

- Reallocate the Gulf of Mexico red snapper stock annual catch limit between the recreational and commercial sectors of the reef fish fishery.
- Based on the proposed reallocation, set the 2016 and 2017 red snapper commercial and recreational quotas.
- Based on the new recreational quotas, set the 2016 and 2017 federal for-hire and private angling component sub-quotas.
- Set the 2016 and 2017 recreational and respective recreational component annual catch targets.

#### Definitions

**Annual Catch Limits** are the amount of fish that can be harvested from the stock each year. Note: For red snapper, quotas are considered the same as annual catch limits

**Annual catch target** is the acceptable level of landings that provide a buffer, if needed, for management uncertainty.

### What is the proposed red snapper allocation?

- Amendment 28 would reallocate 2.5 percent of the stock annual catch limit from the commercial sector to the recreational sector.
- The resulting commercial and recreational quotas would be based respectively on a 48.5:51.5 percent allocation of the stock annual catch limit rather than the current 51:49 percent allocation.

### What is the rationale for changing the allocation?

- To reallocate the red snapper harvest consistent with the 2014 red snapper update assessment.
- To ensure the allowable catch and recovery benefits from a rebuilding population are fairly and equitably allocated between commercial and recreational fishermen.

**What would the quotas and annual catch targets be for 2016 and 2017 based on the proposed reallocation?**

- Table 1 shows the proposed quotas and annual catch targets.

**Table 1.** Proposed Gulf of Mexico red snapper 2016 and 2017 commercial and recreational quotas, recreational annual catch targets, and recreational federal for-hire and private angling component quotas and annual catch targets. Note the quotas and annual catch targets are in millions of pounds.

Sector or component	Quota		Annual catch target	
	2016	2017	2016	2017
Commercial	6.768	6.664	---	---
Recreational	7.192	7.076	5.754	5.661
Federal for-hire	3.042	2.993	2.434	2.395
Private angling	4.150	4.083	3.320	3.266

**How did the Council determine how to divide the stock red snapper annual catch limit between the commercial and recreational sectors?**

- The proposed allocation was based on changes in how the recreational catch is estimated.
- The red snapper annual catch limit was calculated using both the old and new recreational catch estimates.
- The new recreational catch estimates were higher because of changes in methodology.
- The higher catch estimates resulted in higher annual catch limit estimates from the stock assessment.
- The difference between the two red snapper annual catch limits was then added to the recreational quota.
- The result was a 2.5 percent shift in allocation from the commercial fishery to the recreational fishery.

**How will this action affect commercial red snapper individual fishing quota (IFQ) shareholders?**

- Because of the time needed to implement this action, the reduced commercial quota proposed in Amendment 28 will not be implemented prior to the January 1 start of the 2016 fishing season.
- To allow 2016 IFQ shares to be distributed to shareholders, a framework action was implemented to withhold a portion of the current 2016 quota.
- The amount that would be withheld is equal to the difference between the current 2016 quota and the proposed 2016 quota to be implemented through Amendment 28.
- Should Amendment 28 not be approved, the amount of quota withheld would be dispersed back to the IFQ shareholders.

### What is the process for implementing these management measures?

- The Secretary of Commerce must approve or disapprove Amendment 28.
  - A notice of availability is published in the *Federal Register* to make the public aware of the amendment and that they can comment on it.
  - There is a 60-day comment period on the amendment after the notice is published.
  - Based, in part, on comments received from the public, the Secretary of Commerce will make a decision to approve or disapprove the amendment.
- Revisions to the red snapper quotas and annual catch targets resulting from the proposed allocation in Amendment 28 would be implemented through rulemaking.
  - Proposed rule
    - NOAA Fisheries published the proposed rule in the *Federal Register*.
    - There is a 45-day period for the public to comment on the rule.
    - Comments will be used to evaluate the rule.
  - Final rule
    - If Amendment 28 is approved, comments received from the notice of availability and the proposed rule will be addressed in the final rule.
    - The final rule will be published in the *Federal Register*.
    - There will be a 30-day cooling off period after the rule publishes until it is effective.

### How can I comment on the rule/amendment?

- There are two open comment periods.
- Comments on Amendment 28 during the Notice of Availability comment period must be received no later than **February 22, 2016**.
- Comments on the proposed rule must be received no later than **March 10, 2016**.
- You may submit comments on Amendment 28 or the proposed rule, identified by NOAA-NMFS-2014-0107, by any of the following methods:
  - Electronic Submission: Submit all electronic public comments via the Federal e-Rulemaking Portal. Go to <http://www.regulations.gov/#!docketDetail;D=NOAA-NMFS-2013-0146>, click the "Comment Now!" icon, complete the required fields, and enter or attach your comments.
  - Mail: Submit written comments to Peter Hood, NOAA Fisheries, Southeast Regional Office, Sustainable Fisheries Division, 263 13th Avenue South, St. Petersburg, Florida 33701-5505.

### **Links to additional information on red snapper management and rulemaking**

- You may obtain electronic copies of Amendment 28 and the proposed rule from the NOAA Fisheries Web site:  
[http://sero.nmfs.noaa.gov/sustainable\\_fisheries/gulf\\_fisheries/reef\\_fish/2013/am28/index.html](http://sero.nmfs.noaa.gov/sustainable_fisheries/gulf_fisheries/reef_fish/2013/am28/index.html)  
or the e-Rulemaking Portal: [www.regulations.gov](http://www.regulations.gov).
- Information on the Framework Action to Withhold a Portion of the Commercial Red Snapper Quota for 2016 can be found at:  
[http://sero.nmfs.noaa.gov/sustainable\\_fisheries/gulf\\_fisheries/reef\\_fish/2015/rs\\_framework\\_2016\\_quota/index.html](http://sero.nmfs.noaa.gov/sustainable_fisheries/gulf_fisheries/reef_fish/2015/rs_framework_2016_quota/index.html)
- An overview on red snapper recreational management in the Gulf of Mexico can be found at:  
[http://sero.nmfs.noaa.gov/sustainable\\_fisheries/gulf\\_fisheries/red\\_snapper/index.html](http://sero.nmfs.noaa.gov/sustainable_fisheries/gulf_fisheries/red_snapper/index.html).